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US Department of Energy
Office of General Council
GC-52
1000 Independence Ave. SW
Washington DC 20585

RE: Preparation of Report to Congress on Price-Anderson Act

Dear Office of General Council:

The Price Anderson Act should be eliminated.

The Price Anderson Act assumes that the encouragement and growth of the commercial nuclear industry is in the public interest. It is not.

Rational evaluation of the commercial nuclear industry forces the conclusion that the Price Anderson Act simply shields the commercial nuclear industry from costs that it would otherwise, in a fair market setting, be forced to internalize and pay. Price Anderson amounts to corporate welfare that has already caused a massive disruption of energy markets, and the abusiveness enabled by this welfare system threatens to dislodge society from its ecological as well as its economic foundation.

These shielded, or externalized costs include protection against the costs the nuclear industry would otherwise incur when reactors experience catastrophic technology failure. That such failure will occur is evidenced by the record of the public meeting of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission meeting on February 27, 1996, when cascading steam-generator tube ruptures were discussed. Other reactor components, such as vessel head penetrations, shrouds, and primary steam lines are also increasingly likely to fail, with catastrophic results.

Electric utilities would not likely subject society to this type of risk and threat if they were not shielded from associated liability costs by Price Anderson. But when such events occur, as they will unless commercial reactors are phased-out first, \$8.96 billion will not begin to cover actual damages. A few large corporate claims will be paid, and surviving members of the general public will get screwed.

These shielded, or externalized costs also include protection for the nuclear industry against the costs of radiation releases caused by the failure of experimental radioactive waste management technologies, such as dry cask storage. As the NRC acknowledged on May 30, 1996, and several times thereafter, there is no actual experience in unloading high-level nuclear waste from dry storage casks after a storage period. Because safe cask maintenance and unloading procedures are unknown, authorized high-level waste management technologies may result in massive radioactive contamination of the public, and incur significant public health costs. Why should the public subsidize this industry thereby enabling it to subject society to such risks and threats?

Price Anderson serves only elitist private interests that are invested into the commercial nuclear industry. It serves no public interest, and, in fact, it thwarts the public interest in an energy future based on the efficient use of renewable energy resources because it unfairly subsidizes nuclear energy.

Price Anderson prevents fair market forces from acting in energy markets because it prevents the actual cost of energy from being put on the table. As the electric utility industry wants more competition in energy markets, that competition must be based on actual energy production costs. Price Anderson, however, unfairly biases actual production costs in favor of nuclear energy.

By eliminating the Price Anderson Act, it will become much more possible to put the actual price of nuclear energy on the table in energy markets, with fair market competition. Fair market competition in energy markets is what energy suppliers claim they want. Let them have it.

If I want to drive my car, I have to pay my own insurance. If I don't pay, I can't drive. Taxpayers don't pay it for me. By what right does the commercial nuclear industry get a free ride at taxpayer expense? Nuclear energy cannot be in the public interest unless and until it pays its own freight.

It is time to stop this nuclear fraud and swindle. Eliminate Price Anderson. Support an energy future based on the real cost of providing energy services.

Sincerely,

George Crocker
Executive Director